



# Frequently Asked Questions Coronavirus (COVID-19)

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Version 4

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) - FAQs

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# Coronavirus (COVID-19) - FAQs

## General Information

### Q1: What is a quarantinable communicable disease?

A: For purposes of this FAQ, the term “quarantinable communicable disease” means a disease for which Federal isolation and quarantine are authorized. Isolation can be used to separate people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick in order to stop the spread of that illness. Quarantine can be used to separate and restrict the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick and to prevent the possible spread of that disease to others. Employees and supervisors should refer to the list of quarantinable communicable diseases at <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/aboutlawsregulationsquarantineisolation.html>.

### Q2: Is the Coronavirus (COVID-19) a quarantinable communicable disease?

A: Yes, the list of quarantinable communicable diseases for which federal public health orders are authorized is defined by Executive Order and includes “severe acute respiratory syndromes.” COVID-19 meets the definition for “severe acute respiratory syndromes” as set forth in Executive Order 13295, as amended by Executive Order 13375 and 13674, and, therefore, is a federally quarantinable communicable disease. All personnel are encouraged to follow DoD and CDC guidance and take precautions to stay healthy. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>)

## Sick Leave

### Q3: If I have been exposed to a quarantinable communicable disease, can I take leave?

A: Yes, if you have been exposed to a to a quarantinable communicable disease, such as COVID-19, and are subject to either isolation or quarantine, as required by a health authority with jurisdiction or a health care provider, you are entitled to leave.

- If you are asymptomatic (i.e., healthy, not displaying symptoms of the given disease) you will be authorized safety leave. Safety leave is separate from accrued sick or annual leave.
- If you are symptomatic (ill) you are entitled to use accrued sick or annual leave.

The determination of actual exposure must be made by a health authority with jurisdiction or a health care provider. If you are on an approved telework agreement, and asymptomatic, you must telework or obtain approval to take leave (e.g., annual leave).

### Q4: If everyone is getting sick at work, can I take sick leave to avoid being exposed?

A: No, sick leave cannot be used *solely* to avoid exposure. Sick leave can be used when, as determined by the health authorities having jurisdiction or by a health care provider, your presence on the job would jeopardize the health of others because of your actual exposure to any communicable disease.

Sick leave may also be used:

- to receive medical, dental, or optical examination or treatment, or
- if you are incapacitated to performance the duties of your position as the result of physical or mental illness, injury, pregnancy, or childbirth

Additional information on sick leave for personal medical needs can be found at

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/personal-sick-leave/>

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**Q5: Can I take sick leave to provide care for a family member infected with a quarantinable communicable disease such as COVID-19?**

A: Yes, you are entitled to use up to 12 weeks (480 hours) of sick leave each leave year to care for a family member with a serious health condition. If your family member is symptomatic (ill) due to a quarantinable communicable disease, such as COVID-19, that would generally constitute a serious health condition, which would allow use of up to 12 weeks of an employee's accrued sick leave to care for that family member. Additional information on sick leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/factsheets/sick-leave-to-care-for-a-family-member-with-a-serious-health-condition/>

**Q6: If I am ill or have been exposed to a quarantinable communicable disease but want to work, can my supervisor force me to take leave? (UPDATED!)**

A: Yes, if your supervisor has a legitimate concern regarding your health he or she may separate you from other employees and send you home requiring you to use accrued sick or annual leave, or place you in a leave without pay status, or allow you to telework if you are telework ready. In cases of a pandemic, such as a quarantinable communicable disease, your supervisor may be required to take actions because of the guidance or directive of public health officials regarding danger to public health. If sent home, you will not be allowed to return to work until you are free of fever (100.4°F or greater using an oral thermometer) without the use of medication.

**Q7: If I think I may have COVID-19 or are otherwise sick, do I have to provide my supervisor a doctor's note? (UPDATED!)**

A: No. Although some supervisors do require a doctor's note for periods of sick leave in excess of 3 days, public health safety measures take priority over NAVFAC NW administrative requirements. For the duration of the pandemic, you need to follow CDC and your doctor's recommendations regarding assessment, testing and treatment for all medical conditions to avoid overwhelming local resources unnecessarily. During the period of the pandemic, contact your health care provider or the CDC by telephone for guidance before leaving home to avoid exposing other individuals.

### Leave Without Pay

**Q8: What if I don't have leave, or if I will exhaust my leave, can I be granted leave without pay?**

A: Yes, if you have exhausted your leave you may request leave without pay (LWOP). In most instances, granting LWOP is a matter of supervisory discretion. While FMLA leave, as described above, is limited to specific purposes, LWOP may be granted for any reason approved by the agency. It is important to note that an extended period of LWOP may have an adverse effect on your benefits including health benefits, retirement benefits, and life insurance. Additional information on LWOP can be found at: <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/leave-without-pay> and <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/effect-of-extended-leave-without-pay-lwop-or-other-nonpay-status-on-federal-benefits-and-programs/>

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**Q9: Can I invoke my entitlement to use the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to care for a family member with a quarantinable communicable disease, such as COVID-19?**

A: Yes, you are entitled to a total of up to 12 workweeks of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) under the FMLA to care for a spouse, son or daughter, or parent with a serious health condition. You may also substitute your accrued annual and/or sick leave for unpaid leave. An employee or family member who contracts a quarantinable communicable disease, such as COVID-19, and becomes ill would generally be considered to have a qualifying serious health condition. Additional information on FMLA can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/familyand-medical-leave/>

### Weather and Safety Leave

**Q10. How do I get approval for Safety Leave?**

A: It is a Command decision to grant Safety Leave. If you think you should be put on Safety Leave, please immediately notify your supervisory chain. (A phone call is advised in lieu of reporting in person.) Only the Business Director (BD), Executive Officer (XO), and the Commanding Officer (CO), (or their designee) have the authority to approval Safety Leave. Further, Safety Leave is restricted in SLDCADA so unless approved, you will not be able to charge to Safety Leave on your timecard.

**Q11. How come people are returning from Japan and not being put on Safety Leave?**

A: SECDEF issued guidance this week regarding travel restrictions which closely follow the CDC Travel Health Notices. CDC restrictions and guidance are continuously updated and monitored by command leadership. All employees who recently returned from overseas have done so within the parameters of the CDC requirements. These employees had been cleared to return to the United States and were not required to self-quarantine including those returning from Japan. However, as guidance from the CDC is updated, future employees returning from overseas may be required to follow different steps.

**Q12. If I am asymptomatic (i.e., not ill) but subject to movement restrictions (quarantine or isolation) can I be authorized Weather and Safety Leave? (UPDATED!)**

A: Yes, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has determined that agencies may authorize *weather and safety* leave when an asymptomatic employee (i.e., healthy, not displaying symptoms of the given disease) is subject to movement restrictions (quarantine or isolation) under the direction of public health authorities due to a significant risk of exposure to a quarantinable communicable disease, such as COVID-19. (See also Q.10. for approval procedures. See also the Telework section of this document if you are on a signed telework agreement.)

**Q13. My kid's school closed due to Corona Virus concerns. Can I get Weather and Safety Leave to stay home with them? (UPDATED!)**

A: No. In these situations, you would be required to use annual leave or may request leave without pay. You may be authorized telework as long as you have a telework agreement in place. Employees in positions that are not eligible to telework (e.g., Motor Vehicle Operators, Boiler Plant Operators, etc.) may perform light duty assignments from home to avoid charging to annual leave or leave without pay. (See also School Closures section of this document.)

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## Advanced Annual and/or Sick Leave

Q14. What if I don't have leave, or if I will exhaust my leave, can I request advanced annual and/or sick leave?

A: Yes, you may receive advanced annual leave in an amount not to exceed the amount you would accrue during the remainder of the leave year. You may also receive a maximum of up to 30 days (240 hours) of advanced sick leave, subject to limitations, to be used for the same reasons as sick leave.

Additional information on advanced annual leave can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/advanced-annual-leave/>

Additional information on advanced sick leave can be found at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/advanced-sick-leave>

## Voluntary Leave Transfer Program

Q15: If I have a medical emergency related to COVID-19, can I participate in the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program (VLTP)?

A: Yes, if you have a personal or family medical emergency related to a quarantinable communicable disease, such as COVID-19, and are absent (or expected to be absent) from duty *without available paid leave* for at least 24 work hours, you may qualify to receive donated annual leave under the VLTP. You should work with your supervisor to request to participate in the VLTP if needed.

## Telework

Q16: I have a signed telework agreement, am I required to telework if I have been exposed to a quarantinable communicable disease?

A: Yes, provided that you are able to perform work and not symptomatic (ill). As found in your telework agreement, you are required to telework in the case of a temporary emergency situation including a pandemic. If you do not want to telework, you may request to take leave as described elsewhere in this document. All employees with a signed telework agreement are required to be in a "telework ready" status during emergency situations including a pandemic.

Q17: Can I request permission to telework to avoid being exposed? (UPDATED!)

A: Yes. The Federal Government uses telework, among other things, to promote continuity of operations by allowing Federal employees to continue their work at an approved alternative worksite. If you are not currently telework eligible, discuss this option with your supervisor. All supervisors have been encouraged to support telework to the greatest extent possible. See also emergency telework guidance and process: [Emergency Telework Process](#).

Q18: Q11 states that I can telework if my kid's school is closed. I thought telework was not a substitute for child care?

A: Telework requires that you are able to be actively engaged in work from home. The mere presence of children in the home does not preclude your telework eligibility. If you have young children at home and do not have a responsible person to assist with their care, your availability may be more limited or non-existent.

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**Q19:** Normally I prefer not to telework but am willing to for the duration of the Coronavirus outbreak. Is that an option? **(UPDATED!)**

**A:** Yes. Your telework agreement can be cancelled at any time. You are strongly encouraged to sign an agreement for situational telework now so you have the option should you need to. See emergency telework guidance and process: [Emergency Telework Process](#).

**Q20:** Can my supervisor force me to telework if my building or worksite is closed? **(UPDATED!)**

**A:** Now that the Coronavirus has been classified as a Pandemic, you can be ordered to telework if your worksite comes under an emergency evacuation order. This is true even if you do not have a telework agreement in place. Also, your supervisor can assign you to work at another location during the closure, including another installation. If your normal duty station is Bangor, and you are prevented from reporting for duty there, your supervisor can direct you to report for work at Bremerton, Everett, or Whidbey Island instead.

**Q21:** What if I do not have a sufficient amount of work to cover the entire telework day? **(NEW!)**

**A:** You must always have a sufficient amount of work to perform throughout the workday when you telework. If you do not have enough work, you must notify your supervisor and receive additional work assignments or request leave. If in the rare occurrence, your supervisor is unable to identify work for you, Safety Leave may be requested via the chain of command. (See also Q.10)

### Light Duty (New)

**Q22:** My position is not eligible for telework, does that mean I can't request or be directed to perform work at home?

**A:** No. If you are unable to perform your normal duties from home (e.g., Motor Vehicle Operators, Boiler Plant Operators...) you may be assigned, and required to perform, light duty assignments such as completing training, reviewing technical work documents or any other duties as assigned by your supervisor. (See also Q.20)

### School Closures (New)

**Q23:** The school/childcare that my child goes to is closed, am I able to take leave? **(New!)**

**A:** Yes, however, the type of leave depends on the situation. You may be eligible to request sick leave, annual leave, leave without pay or leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

- If your child is healthy and has not been exposed to a communicable disease, you may take annual leave or leave without pay. You cannot take sick leave.
- If your child has been exposed to a communicable disease but is not sick, you may take up to 13 days of sick leave only if it has been determined that your child's presence in the community would jeopardize the health of others because of that exposure.
- If your child is sick, due to a communicable disease or otherwise, the employee may use up to 13 days of sick leave to care for that child. If the child's illness rises to the level of a serious health condition, the employee may use up to 12 weeks of sick leave and/or may invoke leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which would provide up to an additional 12 weeks of unpaid leave (with substitution of annual or sick leave, according to the appropriate regulations).



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Additional information on advanced sick leave can be found at: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/leave-administration/fact-sheets/sick-leave-for-family-care-or-bereavement-purposes/>.

Q24: The school/childcare that my child goes to is closed, am I able to telework? **(New!)**

A: Yes, however, you must still account for work and non-work hours during your tour of duty and take appropriate leave (described above) to account for time spent away from work-related duties (e.g., to care for a child or dependent).

## Travel **(New!)**

Q25: I have approved leave and a vacation scheduled, can I still travel? **(NEW!)**

A: If you have approved leave you may continue to travel to your desired location; however, you should be advised of the health risk you may assume and requirements notify your supervisor and self-isolate and/or take leave or telework upon your return. The CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to Travel Health Notice (THN) level 3 countries and recommends that older adults or those who have chronic medical conditions consider postponing travel to all other locations. The following link provides the CDC THN level advisory:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

Q26: I have official travel (TDY) coming up, am I still authorized to go? **(NEW)**

A: Effective March 13, 2020, travel to, from, or through Outside the Continental United States CDC Travel Health Notice (THN) level 3 locations is prohibited. Mission essential travel to locations other than CDC THN 3 locations is permitted, however, all non-mission essential travel to all locations will be deferred until further notice. You should check with your supervisor to find out if your trip must be cancelled.

## Workers Compensation

Q27: If I contract COVID-19, either directly or indirectly from a coworker or while on official travel, am I eligible for Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA) payments?

A: A Federal employee who contracts COVID-19, while in performance of their job duties would have the full coverage of the FECA for related medical treatment and for wage loss or disability related to that condition or associated complications. However, under 20 C.F.R. § 10.303, exposure to COVID-19 alone does not constitute a work-related injury entitling an employee to medical treatment under the FECA. The employee must actually be diagnosed with COVID-19 to potentially be afforded coverage. To establish coverage, the employee must submit a medical report from a qualified physician as defined in 5 U.S.C. § 8101(2) reflecting a positive test result for COVID-19 based on established employment-related exposure to COVID-19.

## Additional Information and Guidance

Q28: Where can I get the most up-to-date information and guidance on COVID-19?

A: You are encouraged to use the following resources for the most up-to-date information.

- For the most up-to-date **CDC information concerning 2019-nCoV**, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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- For the most up-to-date **Occupational Safety and Health Administration information** concerning 2019-nCoV, please visit: [https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel\\_coronavirus/](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/)
- For the most up-to-date **overseas travel information** from the U.S. Department of State, please visit:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

Additional Information can be found at:

- Washington State Department of Health:  
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>
- Washington State Department of Health Coronavirus Hotline: 1-800-525-0127
- Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center - [www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/program-and-policy-support/Pages/Novel-Coronavirus.aspx](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/program-and-policy-support/Pages/Novel-Coronavirus.aspx)
- World Health Organization - [www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen](http://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen)

*All DON personnel are encouraged to follow DoD and CDC guidance and take precautions to stay healthy. (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>)*

Q29: If I have additional question and concerns related to leave and workplace options, where can I go to for help?

A: You should contact your supervisor or Human Resources Office (HRO) by calling (360) 396-0932 or emailing [NAVFAC\\_NW\\_HR2@navy.mil](mailto:NAVFAC_NW_HR2@navy.mil).